

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1 through 41 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter.

Please add Claims 42-53 as follows.

Claims 1 through 41 have been cancelled.

42. (New) An exposure processing system, comprising:

an exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer to a pattern on a reticle in a first atmosphere;

a reticle stocker having a sealing member and an atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of the sealing member to a second atmosphere, for stocking the reticle in the second atmosphere;

a transfer path for transferring the reticle from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus and for transferring the reticle from said exposure apparatus to said reticle stocker; and

a load-lock chamber for transferring the reticle to said reticle stocker, after the reticle is received from an exterior of said exposure processing system and an atmosphere replacement is performed to change an exterior atmosphere to the second atmosphere.

43. (New) The system according to claim 1, wherein said transfer path has a second load-lock chamber for transferring the reticle to said exposure apparatus, after the

reticle is received from said reticle stocker and an atmosphere replacement is performed to change the second atmosphere to the first atmosphere.

44. (New) The system according to claim 1, wherein said exposure apparatus transfers the pattern on the reticle to the wafer using an F₂ excimer laser; and

wherein an oxygen concentration of said first atmosphere is equal to or less than 1 ppm and an oxygen concentration of said second atmosphere is equal to or less than 50 ppm.

45. (New) The system according to claim 1, wherein said atmosphere controller has evacuation means and inert gas injection means, and repeats alternatively an evacuation by said evacuation means and an inert gas injection by said inert gas injection means.

46. (New) The system according to claim 1, further comprising confirmation means for confirming whether the reticle have been stocked in said reticle stocker for a predetermined time, when the reticle is transferred from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus.

47. (New) The system according to claim 1, wherein said reticle is stored in a reticle box;

wherein said load-lock chamber performs atmosphere replacement to control an external atmosphere of said exposure processing system to the second atmosphere while said reticle box is opened, after the reticle stored in said reticle box is received from an

exterior of said exposure processing system; and

wherein said transfer path transfers the reticle stored in said reticle box from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus while said reticle box is closed.

48. (New) The system according to claim 1, wherein said reticle is stored in a reticle box,

wherein said reticle stocker stocks the reticle stored in said reticle box in said second atmosphere while said reticle box is opened; and

wherein said transfer path transfers the reticle stored in said reticle box from said reticle stocker to said exposure apparatus while said reticle box is closed.

49. (New) A device manufacturing method, comprising:

a step of performing an exposure process for a wafer using an exposure processing system according to claim 1; and

a step of developing the wafer.

50. (New) A stocker for stocking a substrate covered with a substrate cover, comprising:

a sealing member for storing the substrate covered with said substrate cover;

a first atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of said substrate cover to a first atmosphere; and

a second atmosphere controller for controlling a space between an interior of said sealing member and an exterior of said substrate cover to a second atmosphere;

wherein a control of said first atmosphere controller and a control of second atmosphere controller are performed simultaneously.

51. (New) An exposure processing system, comprising:

an exposure apparatus for performing an exposure process for a substrate covered with a substrate cover in a first atmosphere;

B1 a substrate stocker having a sealing member for storing said substrate, and having an atmosphere controller for controlling an interior of said substrate cover to a second atmosphere and for controlling a space between an interior of said sealing member and an exterior of said substrate cover to a third atmosphere; and

a transfer path for transferring the substrate between said exposure apparatus and said substrate stocker.

52. (New) The system according to claim 10, wherein said exposure apparatus transfers the pattern on the reticle to the wafer using F_2 excimer laser; and

wherein an oxygen concentration of said first atmosphere is equal to or less than 1 ppm, an oxygen concentration of said second atmosphere is equal to or less than 5 ppm and an oxygen concentration of said third atmosphere is equal to or less than 50 ppm.

53. (New) A device manufacturing method, comprising:

a step of exposing a wafer to a pattern on a reticle using an exposure processing system according to claim 10; and

a step of developing the wafer;

wherein said substrate is the wafer or the reticle.